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Scranage Dated Ghanaian After Order, FBI Says

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A former CIA employee charged with giving secret information about U.S. operations in Ghana to her Ghanaian lover continued seeing him after superiors ordered her to end the relationship, and she eventually provided him with the identities of 14 CIA informants, an FBI agent testified yesterday.

Sharon M. Scranage told FBI agents that her lover, Michael Agbotui Soussoudis, had "implied that people at the [U.S.] embassy [in Ghana] and their families could be hurt by accidents that could be arranged" and that "a CIA employee could be shot" if she did not cooperate with him, FBI special agent Eugene J. Noltkamper said.

Yesterday's testimony indicated that Scranage began divulging secrets long after the couple began dating—after Soussoudis' discovery that she worked for the CIA, after his alleged threats, and a year after she was ordered to end the relationship.

Scranage had "top-secret clearance" when she worked for the CIA at the U.S. embassy in the Ghanaian capital of Accra from May 1983 to May 1985, Noltkamper testified yesterday before a federal magistrate in Alexandria.

Her job as an "operations support analyst" gave her access to sensitive material in the CIA office, where her tasks included acting as a back-up radio operator, filing documents and sending and receiving classified documents in a diplomatic pouch, Noltkamper said.

U.S. Magistrate W. Harris Grimsley yesterday ordered Soussoudis, 39, held without bond on espionage charges. Grimsley declined an offer by the Ghanaian ambassador to the United States, Eric Otoo, to allow Soussoudis to live at his residence. Otoo had offered to take responsibility for court appearances by Soussoudis, a relative of the head of the Ghanaian government, Flight Lt. Jerry John Rawlings.

Scranage, 29, was released into her parents' custody Thursday after they used their family home in King George County, Va., as security for her \$25,000 bond. She also is charged with espionage.

Scranage told FBI agents that "she had done wrong and knew she had done it" during three days of questioning at the Marriott in Tysons Corner June 8-10, Noltkamper testified. "She knew her actions put [CIA personnel] in danger," he said.

Scranage admitted passing secrets after her responses on a routine polygraph after her Ghana tour aroused suspicions, sources said. Acting on FBI instructions, she lured Soussoudis to the Springfield Holiday Inn where he was arrested July 10, Noltkamper said.

Scranage met Soussoudis, who described himself as a businessman, "within days" of her arrival in Ghana as a CIA employee in May 1983, Noltkamper testified yesterday. He said the two "began to date steadily."

Sometime in 1983, the CIA station chief in Accra warned Scranage "to be careful in her relationship" with Soussoudis, Noltkamper said. In December 1983, she received "specific" orders "to disengage herself from her relationship with Soussoudis," Noltkamper said. He said the order came "in the form of a cable" from the CIA in Washington and was relayed to Scranage by the station chief.

Intelligence specialists said the CIA's failure to monitor closely Scranage's relationship with Soussoudis appeared to be a blunder.

CIA employees working overseas usually are required to fill out forms detailing relationships with foreigners, intelligence specialists said.

CIA security officials often insist on knowing personal details of relationships with foreigners, they said. Sometimes security officers order a CIA employee to end a relationship, and occasionally they allow it to continue with hopes of recruiting the other person as an informant, they said.

In January 1984, Soussoudis, who travels on a Ghanaian passport and is a permanent resident of the United States, left Ghana and came to live in New York. He spent a few days with Scranage in July 1984 when she came home on vacation, Noltkamper said. Soussoudis re-

turned to Ghana in November 1984. The following month, armed with a 9 mm automatic pistol, he visited Scranage, Noltkamper said.

During the meeting, Noltkamper said, Soussoudis "was yelling and screaming . . . and he got upset by the fact that she was employed by the CIA." He reportedly said Scranage "confirmed the fact that she was employed by the CIA. She told him about meetings her chief of station was having and indicated that he was her boss."

Soussoudis asked Scranage for classified information at that time, including the names of CIA personnel in Ghana and the names of people reporting to the CIA, because "it would help himself and Ghana," Noltkamper testified.

When Scranage said she could not get that information, Soussoudis replied, "Yes you can, you are a CIA agent," Noltkamper said. He said Soussoudis also asked her for classified information on dissident groups in Ghana.

It was then that Soussoudis made threats against CIA personnel, Scranage told the FBI. Noltkamper testified that Soussoudis told Scranage that "people more treacherous than himself could cause accidents like brakes going out or that somebody could be shot in the street."

Their dating relationship continued, Noltkamper said, although Scranage "felt threatened" by the fact that Soussoudis kept a pistol under his pillow when he slept.

From January to May, Scranage gave Soussoudis classified information she obtained from the files of the CIA office at the embassy, from cable traffic and from her knowledge of operations at the CIA station, the FBI agent testified.

Soussoudis' lawyer, Thomas Dyson, argued that his client "was not trying to get any information which had to do with the U.S. either internally or abroad. He was trying to gain the names of Ghanaian citizens who, for the purposes of this discussion, were traitors to Ghana."

Staff writer John Mintz contributed to this report.